



# INFORMATION FOR NEW CAT ADOPTERS-FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS (FeLV)

## *What you should know about Feline Leukemia Virus*

Feline Leukemia (FeLV) is a potentially cancerous disease caused by the feline leukemia virus. If left unmonitored, FeLV positive cats can struggle with loss of appetite, weight loss, fever, gum problems and skin infections. Cats may not start to show signs of the disease for months or even years after being infected. FeLV positive cats and kittens can live for years with proper care and there is evidence young FeLV positive cats may outgrow the disease.

### **How contagious is Feline Leukemia Virus?**

*Feline Leukemia Virus is contagious to other cats.* Most cats are vaccinated against it (it's part of the standard yearly vaccinations recommended by most vets). However, the vaccine is not 100% protective, so it's a good idea to isolate cats showing signs of the disease, and wash hands after handling sick cats. (In general we recommend isolating all new arrivals in your household for 8-10 days after adoption so they can settle in and make sure they are not coming down with anything.) FeLV positive cats can be good choice for "single kitty" households and there is no evidence bringing a FeLV positive cat into your home will affect your family or even your dog.



### **What cats are at greatest risk of infection?**

Because kittens are more susceptible to infection than adult cats, they are at greatest risk for FeLV. Kittens born to infected mothers will likely contract the disease but as young cats mature their resistance to the disease also increases. Outdoor cats, cats who are living with infected cats or with cats who may be infected are also a high risk category. Your cat could get Feline Leukemia if he or she is unprotected against the disease with vaccination.

*Every animal adopted from a shelter should be taken for an examination by your regular vet within 2 days*

### **What are the signs of Feline Leukemia Virus?**

- Loss of appetite
- Slow but progressive weight loss, followed by severe wasting late in the disease process
- Poor coat condition
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Persistent fever
- Pale gums
- Inflammation of the gums and mouth
- Infections of the skin, urinary bladder, and upper respiratory tract
- Persistent diarrhea
- Seizures or severe behavior changes



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